

Recognizing & Overcoming Bias Against Women in Government

Presented by

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About Your Instructor

Dr. Lester Hoffman is the author of the book, "Moving Beyond Bias: Bias-Free Communication Strategies for Today's Organization" (with Skip Pettit), and two forthcoming books in 2012, "Anti-Bias Strategies," and "Thinking Beyond Bias: Quotes & Wisdom of Leaders." He is a nationally renowned workshop leader, keynote speaker, and consultant in the areas of Diversity, Bias, Leadership, and Bullying and Civility. His esteemed client list includes more than a dozen federal agencies (VA, US Navy, EEOC, FCC, Pentagon, NIH, Census Bureau, etc.) as well as over 30 Fortune 250 organizations, including IBM, AT&T, Pfizer, Prudential, FedEx, Lockheed-Martin, Xerox, Bank of America, Goldman-Sachs, Merck, JP Morgan/Chase, Citigroup, Alcoa, and Mitsubishi. Dr. Hoffman's PhD is from Harvard University, where he studied, taught, and researched Cognitive Psychology and Curriculum Design, with partial funding from the National Science Foundation. He lives in New York City.

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Agenda & Goals For The Session

- Participate in a working session that is a learning/discovery experience
- Explore impact of various forms of bias against women in the government workplace, both litigable and not litigable
- Define hidden bias, where it comes from, how it lives and grows in an organization's practices and culture, why its impact is so powerful, and how it can undermine impartiality, neutrality, and objectivity
- Learn about less-known forms of self-bias such as self-stereotyping, stereotype threat, and the Imposter Phenomenon, and how these can unconsciously lead to self-discounting
- Provide tools for recognizing and overcoming various forms of bias
- Learn about over a dozen anti-bias tools and techniques

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Broad Categories of Sources of Bias Against Women

- Institutional/organizational
- Personal/Individual/Teams – from colleagues, coworkers, etc.
- Self-bias and self-discounting

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Overt Bias/Discrimination & Hidden Bias

- **Overt Bias/Discrimination:** Observable or tangible behavior, often or usually litigable
- **Subtle/Hidden Bias:** Non-litigable actions/omissions that involve micro-inequities

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Defining Micro-Inequities & Hidden Bias

- **Micro-Inequities** (the basis of Hidden Bias – Mary Rowe, MIT, originator):
 1. Undercover, hard-to-prove, hurtful events or communication exchanges, or omissions that are often unintentional, covert, and frequently unrecognized by perpetrators, yet distinctively “felt” by recipients
 2. Apparently small events which are often ephemeral and hard-to-prove, events which are covert, often unintentional, frequently unrecognized by the perpetrator, which occur wherever people are perceived to be ‘different’.
- **Micro-Inequities** (another definition): the ways in which individuals are either singled out, or overlooked, ignored, or otherwise discounted, based on an unchangeable characteristic such as race or gender; micro-inequities often take the form of a gesture, a different kind of language, treatment, or tone of voice, or some sort of omission or exclusion
- **Micro-Aggressions:** micro-inequities with a hostile, derogatory, demeaning, or other strong negative quality ... e.g., many forms of bullying

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How & Where Hidden Bias Arises

- Hidden/subtle bias can show up in numerous ways:
 - Language
 - Actions
 - Omissions
 - Stereotypic thinking
 - Listening/accents/names
 - Inner dialogue
 - Thought processes
 - Unconscious perceptions → judgments/decisions
 - Internal self-stereotyping

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Sources of Biased Perceptions/Judgments/Behaviors

Stereotypes

- Definition: an oversimplified, inaccurate, generalized, and fixed or rigid image of a person or persons belonging to a particular group
- Usually formed by isolating or exaggerating certain features – physical, intellectual, cultural, occupational, personal, and so on – which are wrongly thought to characterize the group and all its members
- Discriminatory because they take away a person's individuality.
- Negative stereotypes are a common sources of prejudice
- Usually carrying a derogatory implication
 - But stereotypes can also be positive
 - Yet even stereotypes that seem positive can have negative effects, *because the stereotyped person is not considered as an individual but as a generality*

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Stereotyping of Women in the Workplace

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY

- In your small group, briefly list how women are stereotyped in the government workplace
- Then, create a second list of common impacts of these stereotypes
- Select a scribe/reporter who will write up the group members' ideas and then share them with the group

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Subtle Bias:

Why It's So Pervasive ... But Hard to Detect

- Unlike overt discrimination, subtle bias is hidden and more difficult to identify and confront
- Why? Because it is so often inadvertent, arising from unspoken assumptions we **all** unfortunately share ... or from unrecognized cultural biases we **all** accept ... or from biased language we **all** use without thinking
- Micro-inequities and subtle bias have been called "fiendishly efficient [at] perpetuating unequal opportunity," by virtue of **being in the air that we breathe**, the books we read, the television we watch ... they're woven into the very fabric of our work life"
- While they are "micro" in the sense of being miniature, they are in no way trivial

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"The New Science of Bias" & What It Means

- The IAT (Implicit Association Test) designed by Drs. Greenwald & Banaji shows that "bias is the normal state" of human beings (go to www.implicit.harvard.edu) ... many millions of data points
- The biases revealed to you by the IAT may be largely unconscious ... inadvertent ... and unintended ... but nevertheless "real"
- So, they can influence/control your judgments/behaviors/utterances/decisions
- Mary Rowe at MIT: subtle/hidden bias = *small* acts/omissions with **BIG impacts**
- Our perceptions/filters operate as biases/preferences/stereotypes – for example, "Pygmalion Effect" by Harvard's Rosenthal (confirmed by >600 separate studies)
- However, having such biases does NOT mean that we want to or have to **continue** to be influenced by them

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Your Challenge

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BIAS: What We DK We DK

A person's or organization's DKDK is their "blind spot"

What We Don't Know About Our Biases & Their Impact

- Unconscious (Subtle) Bias impacts these and other actions:
 - Recruiting and hiring decisions
 - All aspects of the performance appraisal process
 - Performance management/feedback
 - Promotion and merit increases
 - Retention strategies and decisions
 - Decisions about coaching & mentoring
 - Who we include, who we exclude

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Subtle Bias:

Pervasive ... But Hard to Detect

- Unlike overt discrimination, subtle discrimination is more difficult both to identify and to confront
- Why? Because it is so often inadvertent, arising from unspoken assumptions we **all** unfortunately share ... or from unrecognized cultural biases we **all** accept ... or from biased language we **all** use without thinking
- These factors explain why it is **so all-pervasive** and stays that way
- Micro-inequities and subtle bias have been called "fiendishly efficient [at] perpetuating unequal opportunity," by virtue of **being in the air that we breathe**, the books we read, the television we watch ... they're woven into the very threads of our work life
- While they are "micro" in the sense of being miniature, they are in no way trivial

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Subtle Bias:

How Does It Operate?

- How does Subtle Bias operate? By means of:
 - Our **actions and behaviors** – e.g., favoritist treatment of members of certain groups
 - Our **attitudes** (conscious and unconscious)
 - Our **language** – see slide below
 - Our **omissions** – see slide below

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Subtle Bias: Operates by Means of Many Common Linguistic Acts

- Biased **common phraseology**, e.g., “certain staffers,” “women like that,” “you know who I’m referring to,” and so on often perpetuate or even increase bias vs. women
- **Gratuitous specification** (“that new female SES”)
- **Trivializing** gender bias concerns – e.g., “with Joan now on our committee, I’d better say ‘he or she’ now”
- **Juvenalizing** language – e.g., “let’s make sure we get some of the girls on the committee,” “that’s okay, honey”
- **Positive stereotyping** language – e.g., “let’s put Susan on this Task Force – since she’s a woman, she’ll be aware of the human side of the equation”
- **Paralanguage** – e.g., **how** you say something, not what you say – tone, pitch, pacing, volume, etc. – to females versus males

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Subtle Bias: Exclusion Operates by Means of Common Forms of OMISSION

- “Inadvertently” (but routinely) leaving women off of key Task Forces, committees, etc.
- Leaving certain female employees out of workplace social activities (such as lunches) but believing/saying it’s because of their individual traits (not their being in a certain group)
- Choosing out-of-office activities that female employees are less likely to be interested in
- **Invisibility** – e.g., leaving accomplishments of women out of reports
- Not giving a woman credit for their ideas/contributions, e.g., in meetings – that is, until a man says “that’s a great idea”
- Inviting them in, but then NOT treating them as full members, or ignoring them – giving them a seat at the table ... but not soliciting their views or not taking them seriously
- “Forgetting” to introduce the woman by name in key work contexts

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Subtle Bias: Organizational Impact

- Subtle bias costs organizations profoundly
- Example: They are constantly losing – and having to replace – many promising employees ... at huge cost
- Landmark study by LPFI – next slide

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Impact of Hidden Bias in the Workplace

What price do organizations pay for being unaware/unconscious of the cost impact of Subtle Bias?

1. "Corporate Leavers" Study by LPFI (Level Playing Field Institute)
2. >2 million professionals/managers leave their jobs voluntarily each year due to subtle bias: small comments, whispered jokes, bullying, and not-so-funny emails (people who cite such behaviors as **their SOLE reason** for quitting)
3. In addition, a significant number also leave who cite this as one important (but *not* the *sole*) reason for leaving
4. **Reputation damage:** many of these recommend their network NOT to apply for jobs at these employers or purchase their products/services ... making it **impossible** to present oneself as **the employer of choice**

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Hidden Bias & Unfairness: Where Does It Live?

- The unspoken or invisible rules and norms of an organization's culture – where Hidden Bias and unfair behavior live and breathe and are sustained – must be surfaced so they can be confronted for what they are and their impact understood
- And so that their powerful and damaging impact can be dealt with and stopped
- The importance of this has been shown in the work of Dr. Kanu Kogod at NASA and many other organizations

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What Are Various Forms of Bias Against Women in Government?

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY

- In your small group, discuss **specific forms** that bias against women takes in the government
- Select a scribe/reporter who will write up the group members' ideas and then share them with the group

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The Spectrum of Bias Against Women

Subtle/Hidden Bias ■ ■ ■ ■ Violence in the Workplace

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Where Do Different Forms of Bias Against Women Fit on the Spectrum?

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY

- In your small group, discuss where the various **specific forms** of bias against women just identified fit along the spectrum
- Select a scribe/reporter who will write up the group members' ideas and then share them with the group

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Enablers of Opportunity in the Workplace

Determine What Are the REAL "Enablers of Opportunity" in Your Work Unit & Equalize Them for All Employees

1. "Sustaining Pathways" – Extensive study of hidden bias in the legal profession
2. Merit Equation – was thought to be:
Merit (potential for accomplishment) is equal to Talent
3. Merit Equation – now we realize it ought to be:
Merit (potential for accomplishment) is equal to Talent *PLUS* full access to the specific opportunities required to manifest that talent in *THIS* organization
4. Factors serving as barriers to manifesting one's talent include the following types of subtle bias (as acts of omission):
 - Not being given appropriate and experienced mentor and/or coaches (informal and/or formal mentoring)
 - Not being introduced to senior and other "influential" members of the firm
 - Rarely being provided with "plum" assignments, e.g., those whose results will be highly visible
 - Rarely or never being routinely included in development activities
 - Not having "sponsors" or not being given the "right" (i.e., influential) sponsors

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The Spectrum of Bias Against Women: What Is Litigable and What Is Not

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY

- In your small group, discuss which of the various **specific forms** of bias against women identified are or are not litigable – or which are in “gray” areas
- Select a scribe/reporter who will write up the group members’ ideas and then share them with the group

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Self-Bias & Self-Discounting by Women

- Forms of “Self-bias”
 - Self-stereotyping
 - Stereotype threat
 - The Imposter Phenomenon
- How can these powerful processes unconsciously lead to self-discounting?
- What is the impact of self-discounting on perpetuating or even increasing “being a victim of gender bias”?
- How can one recognize, fight, or overcome these self-bias processes?

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Sources of Biased Perceptions/Judgments/Behaviors

Reactions to Names

- Could be names of either or both parties or other names in the case
- Information you receive about any party can generate an unexpected degree of hidden/subtle bias. **Here's an example of systemic unconscious bias:**
- Paper: “Are Emily and Greg More Employable Than Lakisha and Jamal?”
- Identical resumes submitted to >1300 employers but with “white-sounding” vs. “black-sounding” names; both “average” and “highly skilled” versions
- 50% more call-backs for those with white-sounding names
- The *highly skilled* “white-named” candidates received more call-backs than the *average* ones ... but both average and highly-skilled black-sounding resumes got same number of call-backs
- The *average* “white-named” candidates received more call-backs than the *highly-skilled* “black-named” candidates
- The employers were all EEO-committed organizations [federal/private]

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Sources of Biased Perceptions/Judgments/Behaviors

Reactions to Accents

- Recent Univ. of Chicago study found:
 - "Accent discrimination" – usually unconscious – seems to exist
 - Not dependent on whether the person "is prejudiced"
 - Native speakers tend to find those with foreign accents less trustworthy – they are also perceived as less credible
 - The harder it is for us to understand someone, the less likely we are to trust what they're saying – "cognitive fluency" (brain processing)
 - Bias against foreign speech patterns is not recognized as a form of prejudice, and not mentioned in civil rights/EEO guidelines
- **An excellent example of Blind Spots!**

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Sources of Biased Perceptions/Judgments/Behaviors

Must be aware of the Power of Language in general

- Language used to refer to one person in the presence of another
- Language used to refer to the person you are speaking to
- Differences in how you speak to female and to male co-workers or others

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Strategies for Overcoming Bias

- Institutional/organizational
- Personal/Individual/Teams – from colleagues, coworkers, etc.
- Self-bias/self-discounting

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“Look in the Mirror”

- Commit to a new level of growth based on self-awareness & self-knowledge about one's own hidden biases
- Learn about your own biases: take tests at www.implicit.harvard.edu
- Be honest about the implicit biases you discover – such bias is normal
- Even Dr. Greenwald was amazed how biased IAT showed *him* to be!
- Try to learn more about whichever groups you realize you're not comfortable with (however unintentional this may be)
- Learn to watch your own stereotypes “in action” when meeting/interacting with others
 - How will this help you self-reflect?

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Individual Action Plan: Blind Spots

1. What specific actions can I take demonstrating my commitment to learning about blind spots and their impact? My organization's blind spots?
2. What needs to be done in my work to detect, surface, and overcome subtle bias and micro-inequities?
3. How can I help others? How can others help me?

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Next Steps/New Applications

Considering today's training, what is:

- One discussion topic you found of interest, OR
- One blind spot you've seen/experienced in yourself or in others?

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